THE CHURCH

and

THE NATION

Sermon by

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A SERMON

Preached at the Seventy-ninth Annual Meeting of
The Congregational Home Missionary Society
in Springfield, Mass., May 31, 1905

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Moderator of the National Council

The Congregational Home Missionary Society

1905

The Church and the Nation.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me because He anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.—Luke IV:18, 19.

It is a happy coincidence which has placed the anniversary of the Congregational Home Missionary Society on Decoration Day. Those who know what the Society stands for and what its record has been will feel no incongruity between the two observances. Each may lend something to the other of remembrance and of suggestion. The veterans may help us to recall events that show us the real significance of our work, and we may be able to show them that there are still for them standards to lift up and battles to fight.

The Congregational Home Missionary Society was known, forty years ago, as the American Home Missionary Society. It was then, as now, the agent of the Congregational churches, but its name was then, I think, even more significant of its real character than it is to-day, for its larger purpose has always been national more than denominational. Its motto might well have been *Christo et patriæ*, for Christ and Fatherland. It cares less for making Congregationalists than for making patriots and Christians; it values its denominational specialties only as aids in the building of character which shall serve the Kingdom of God, whose largest forms appear, not in the church, but in the nation.

It was the deep consciousness of a great responsibility for the national welfare which filled the hearts of the Congregational people in the middle decades of the last century, and which drew forth the splendid enterprise by which they went out and took possession of the great Northwest. Something made them see that this vast domain was of priceless value to the nation, and that it must be stocked with ideas and influences which would hold it true to the traditions of liberty. When the war broke out the great States of Illinois and Wisconsin and Minnesota and Iowa and Nebraska and Kansas were filled with a population well saturated with the ideas that had given New England her influence in the councils of the nation. That the American Home Missionary Society had done all this work must not be claimed, but it had had a very large share in it. Certain it is that the Congregationalists of those great States were at the front in all that conflict. Wherever there was a Congregational church there was a recruiting agency for the army of

the Union, though many of them, as the conflict deepened, were nearly despoiled of their male membership through the absence of their men in the field. The war record of these American Home Missionary churches of the Northwest is one of which we shall never have occasion to be ashamed. If the great Northwest had not been passionately loyal in that conflict, we could never have held this nation together; and we may safely claim that among the influences which made and kept it loyal, not the least important was the work of this Home Missionary Society. And one who returns, as I have just returned from a journey of nearly three thousand miles through the fertile fields, and the thriving towns and cities of that great Northwest; one who has been looking into the faces of a good many thousands of these Western Congregationalists and has seen their country planted thick with their schools and colleges and churches, and has felt the thrill of their vital enthusiasm for righteousness, and has been able to realize how large a part these States must bear in the future life of the nation, will have gained some new impression of the service which has been rendered to the nation by the society whose anniversary we to-day are keeping.

This anniversary must always take on a patriotic as well as a religious character, and it is therefore fitting that it should occur on this day, and that it should be participated in by the veterans of the civil war. And I desire to draw your attention to certain truths that lie at the foundation of the church and of the nation, truths which we are in danger of forgetting, but of which on this day we may fully be reminded.

The question is sometimes raised whether this is a Christian nation. It is certainly not a Christian nation in any formal or legal sense. Christianity is not established by law, and one of the glories of our Constitution is the provision that religious observances shall never be enforced by law within our borders. Mr. Benjamin Kidd points to that article as the high-water mark of Western Civilization. Indeed, I think we may say that the nation would not be Christian, in the highest and truest sense, if it undertook to enforce by law Christian beliefs or observances. That would be an infraction of a principle that is fundamental in Christianity. A compulsory faith is a contradiction in terms.

But if the nation cannot make itself Christian by legal enactments, it may, nevertheless, be essentially Christian in spirit and in purpose. A nation, as well as a man, may have a Christian character. And while we have no desire to see the establishment of any form of religion by law in this land, most of us would be willing to see the nation in its purposes and policies and ruling aims becoming essentially Christian.

It is also sometimes questioned in these days whether the church is Christian. Before trying to answer, it might be profitable to ask ourselves precisely what is meant by that great adjective. The church

is certainly seeking to be Christian in its doctrines, in its ordinances, in its confession; it calls itself by Christ's name; it professes to believe the truth he taught, and it is, no doubt, in an imperfect way, following him. Yet we must not fail to see that it is not in its doctrines, its ceremonies, or its confessions, but in its character that the church most clearly proves its right to bear the Christian name. The question with the church, as with the man, is not so much whether it professes the Christian faith as whether it lives the Christian life.

Now there is one test which we have a right to apply to the church and to the nation, to see whether they deserve the Christian name. I will not say that it is the only test; it is not. I think that we could conceive of characters which would meet this particular test and which would yet be unworthy of the Christian name. But while the quality which this test demands is not the only essential quality of a Christian man or a Christian church or a Christian nation, it is one of the essential qualities; it is not enough to make a Christian, but there can be no Christian without it. What is this quality? It is brought to light in the verses which I have read for a text.

These words are the first public declaration made by our Lord of the nature of his mission. He had gone, on the Sabbath day, into the synagogue of the village where he had always lived, and after the reading of the law and the prayers, the reader had handed to him the roll of the Prophet Isaiah. Taking it in his hands, he read from it these words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable word of the Lord. And he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all the synagogue were fastened on Him. And he began to say unto them, To-day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears."

It is a most impressive proclamation by the Prince of life himself of the nature of the Kingdom he had come to establish. You may call it his inaugural message.

Jesus quotes these great words of the prophet as having their fulfillment in himself. He is the anointed one, the Messiah; the Spirit of God is upon him; and the proof of his divine commission, of his Messianic royalty, is seen in the fact that he becomes the servant and the helper of the poor and the unfortunate and the needy.

It is for this that he is anointed; this is the meaning of his Messiahship. Surely there can be no more explicit or authoritative statement. But he takes occasion more than once to confirm it, notably on that occasion when John the Baptist, in prison, losing heart and hope, sent

his disciples to ask Jesus, "Art thou He that was to come, or must we look for another?" And Jesus told them to go back and tell John what they had heard and seen—that the needy and the helpless and the miserable had found in him a friend, and that the gospel was preached to the poor.

There can be no doubt, as a matter of history, that these were the people with whom he most clearly identified himself; it was the reproach of those who hated him that his friends were among the lowly; it was the testimony of his companions that the common people heard him gladly.

We may say, then, that by his own testimony, and the testimony of those who stood closest to him, this was the characteristic of his life and mission—this was the sign of his Messiahship—that he identified himself with the lowly and the needy; that he was the friend of the weak and the poor and the friendless.

If this was the characteristic of the Christ, it must be the characteristic of the Christian. The man, the church, the nation that rightly bears the Christian name must possess this characteristic. They must have other qualities also, but they must not lack this. No matter how many other good things may be said about them, if this cannot be said, you must not call them Christians. This is what Paul meant when he said:

"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."

I think that this study helps us to grasp one, at least, of the essential meanings of the great adjective with which we are dealing. And with this meaning in our minds what shall we say? Is this a Christian nation? Does it possess a Christian character? Is its life a Christian life?

I know that there are some who will promptly say, "No; the nation in this sense is not Christian, and we do not want it to be. No nation ought to possess any such character or have any such purposes. It is neither possible nor desirable that a nation should live a Christian life or possess a Christian character. The business of a nation is not charity. Its function is not to practise benevolence, but simply to do justice. It ought to keep people from trespassing on one another; it ought to preserve the peace, and provide for the common defense; it ought, so far as possible, to give every one a chance to exercise his own powers, and there it ought to end."

I know that much can be said for this theory of the life of a nation, but I doubt whether any considerable number of human beings can be

held together very long upon this basis. I do not believe that political society or industrial society or any other society will endure on a purely individualistic basis. There can be no law of profitable human intercourse of which love is not the heart and the fulfillment.

If all men were born equal in physical and mental equipment; if all were started in the race of life with equal powers and opportunities, this rule of *laissez faire* might be a practicable rule, but it is not so; there are vast inequalities; multitudes come into life handicapped in a thousand ways with evil inheritance, and crippling environments, and to fling them all together into the competitive arena and bid them fight it out, is to consign many of them to degradation and destruction. The truth is that this is a world where compassion must be a constant quantity; there is no kind of human association in which it can be spared; and when the State—that is "all of us"—undertakes to adjust our human relations, it will not be possible to dispense with compassion.

In truth this nation has never tried to do any such thing. Its compassion has always found expression in great public ministries to the defective and unfortunate classes. The nation has sometimes been selfish and heathen and cruel; it is not perfect; but a great humanity has been constantly revealed in our national life. I remember, many years ago, quoting to Mr. James Bryce, who knows us so much better than we know ourselves, a remark of one of our own publicists, that American legislation, in the state and the nation, was "ignorant, clumsy and brutal." He answered quickly, "Ignorant? yes; clumsy? yes, of course; but brutal? no, that is not true. The legislation of America is full of the most humane intentions."

I am sure that this has been true. Lowell knew his own motherland when he spoke of her as

> She that lifts up the manhood of the poor,
> She of the open heart and open door,
> With room about her hearth for all mankind.

It would seem to be nearly inevitable that when government is of the people and by the people, and when the people are compassionate and kind, their compassion and kindness will find expression in their national life. That such has been the case, in some good measure, can hardly be denied. It was a great impulse of sympathy with the lowly that drew this nation into its costly struggle with slavery; it is a humane sentiment that has thrown open the door to the millions who have sought our shores from other lands; it is an altruistic habit that has prompted us as a people to interpose when we could in behalf of oppressed peoples, and to stretch forth our hand of sympathy toward the weak and the suffering. I think that without boasting, we may claim

that this nation, in spite of all its faults and sins, has done more than any other nation of history to introduce into diplomacy and international law a larger sentiment of humanity, and to make possible the coming of the day for which the great Englishwoman so passionately prayed, when

> Each Christian nation shall take upon her
> The law of the Christian man in vast ;
> The crown of the getter shall fall to the donor,
> And last shall be first while first shall be last,
> And to love best shall still be to reign unsurpassed.

You observe that I have been putting all these statements about the character and purpose of the nation into the past tense. And you wish to know whether I mean to suggest this is no longer her character or her purpose. No; I would not say that. But I do mean to leave the question open whether there are signs that the nation is in danger of falling from this high position. It is not pessimism; it is simply a wise patriotism which admits such a possibility and bravely faces it.

It must be confessed that the nation is exposed to perils on this side. When we were all poor, it was easy to think of and care for the poor; now that many of us are very rich and strong, and more of us hope to be, and most of us want to be, the claims of the poor and the weak seem less urgent. There is a very powerful class which has little sympathy with the humble and the weak, which builds up its fortunes, indeed, by levying tribute upon their earnings; and there are hundreds of thousands of others who look admiringly upon the exploits of this class and wonder if they may not sometimes be able to imitate them; and there is a great multitude of others whose interests, in one way and another, are identified with the strong and who do not like to antagonize or offend them, so that powerful influences are at work to lower the tone of the national feeling toward the less fortunate classes. The enormous accumulations of wealth which have been heaped up in this country within the past quarter of a century have done much to modify the national character and to sophisticate the public conscience. It cannot be denied that this plutocracy tends to become aggressive and oppressive; it has often shown but slight regard for the laws which have been enacted to restrain its greed; it has sought, and often with too much success, to control the legislatures and the courts in its own interests.

While wealth has been mounting up with gigantic strides, at one end of the social scale, poverty, with stealthy step, has been creeping in at the other. There are no adequate statistics on which definite statements can be based, but a book like that of Mr. Robert Hunter, with its cumulative presentation, makes it all too probable that the number of

those who are always living on the verge of want is growing fast. Prosperous people are much inclined either to discredit such statements or to charge all this increasing want to drink or indolence, but the deeper reason is that opportunity is being contracted, and incentive withdrawn, and burdens increased; while accident and disease which are the direct result of human greed, and which are preventable by wise social regulation, are crippling and disabling many.

Certain it is that there is increasing discontent among the people at the bottom of the social scale. They believe that they are being burdened and laid under tribute by the combinations of selfish wealth. These vast fortunes have been drawn from the industries to which they are giving the strength of their lives for meager reward, and they feel that the distribution is unequitable. It seems to them that vast power has been conferred upon the few, and that it is used for the oppression of the many. If this is done by law the laws are at fault; if it is done by the evasion or defiance of law the fault is with those who administer the laws. In any case the final responsibility rests with the nation—with "all of us." Must we not sorrowfully confess that the nation, drunk with the passion of accumulation, has been growing quite too careless of the interests of its humbler people? Must we not fear that if the nation once possessed a Christian character, she is in danger of losing it? Can we deny that elements and influences which tend to separate the poor from the rich and to harden the hearts of the rich against the poor, have been gaining too much control in our national life? Must we not say that instead of identifying itself with the fortunes of its humblest people, and making sure, first of all, of their welfare, it has been permitting its power to be used, more and more, by the strong for their aggrandizement?

A philosophic observer, whose home is now in Washington, said to me the other day, "It is appalling to any one who lives at the national capital and watches what is going on, to see the extent to which money rules everything."

This tendency does not, indeed, dominate all lives, even in Washington. There are a good many yet who have not bowed the knee to Mammon. There is, I trust, a great multitude of those who do not mean that the nation shall be faithless to her ideals. And among them there is none whose purposes are clearer or whose heart is truer than the man at the head of the nation. It is his chivalrous determination to resist the aggressions of greed, to put an end to the rule of the spoilers and the plunderers and to give "a square deal" to the poor man, as well as the rich man, which has won for our President the love of the people.

This is the kind of leadership which the nation must follow from

this time forward. It must not sell its birthright for gold. It must be, in spirit and purpose and character, a Christian nation. It must incarnate the life of Christ in its national life. It must therefore identify itself with the great masses of the common people. It must make them know and feel that it is their country, that their homes are its care, that their welfare is its pride. It must be able to claim the Messianic royalty; it must stand upon the shore of either sea, lifting up their standard and saying, "Behold my divine anointing: I have a right to rule because I free the slave, I lift up the lowly, I protect the poor."

And now what shall we say of the church? Is it worthy to bear the Christian name? Is it able to say of itself what its Master said of himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord"? Can it confidently quote these words and then call attention to its own life, saying to the multitudes outside its gates, "In these days is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears"? Is it true of the church that this is the characteristic of its life and mission—the outstanding fact of its history—that it identifies itself with the lowly, and the needy; that it stands forth as the friend of the weak and the poor and the friendless; that by virtue of the character and work it keeps the hold upon the common people which its Master always had?

I do not think that any sweeping answer can be given to these questions. If we speak of the church of history, its record, on these counts, though not faultless, is fair and bright. Its ministries to the poor and the lowly through all the ages have been large and bountiful; it has broken the fetters of the slave; it has been the helper of the weak and helpless.

Here, too, in using the past tense, I am not implying that no such signs are to be seen in the present, but I am suggesting, as before, the query whether the church, like the nation, is living up to its ideals. Is there any failure at this point in the church of to-day—in our Congregational churches?

I fear that we must confess that there is failure here. I will not say that we have lost our hold on those whom Christ made his closest friends, but our hold is greatly weakened. Our Congregational churches are not, as a rule, the churches of the common people. My own church is not, and it is a grief and shame to me that it is not. We can bring under our care a certain number of the very poor, those who are more or less thriftless and who find the friendship of the church profitable to themselves; and these are by no means to be despised or rejected; we may be able to help and save some of them—to save them from the bot-

tomless pit of mendicancy, and this is well worth doing; but the class above these—the honest self-supporting, common people—we get very few of them. Many of them are in the Roman Catholic church; that church has the right to call itself Christian, so far as identification with the common people can give the right; and some of our Protestant churches in the cities, and more of them in the villages, succeed in gathering in some of them, but, so far as our Congregationalism is concerned, most of our strong churches, our leading churches, have but slight relations with the toiling classes. One of our most thoughtful pastors said to me the other day, "The Congregational church, as a rule, is the church of the employers." It is not a rule to which there are no exceptions; the church of the minister who made the remark is an exception, and there are others; but your experience will confirm it as a general truth. Nor is Congregationalism alone in this condemnation; other denominations share it.

You will remember that in the London International Council of 1891, an honored Congregational leader maintained that Congregationalism was, by its traditions and tendencies, the church of the intelligent and the well-to-do; that we should recognize that fact and adjust our work to it. Against that proposition there were some warm protests; nevertheless it indicates a fact, and it is a fact in which we should not glory.

I fear that it must be said of the Protestant churches generally, that they have been becoming, more and more, the churches of the employers, and those industrially and socially affiliated with them, and less and less the churches of the plain people who work with their hands. I have been loth to believe this—in fact, I have more than once disputed it; but the truth has been forced upon me. It is a fact which cannot be denied, which must be faced. What does it mean? What shall we say about it? What can we say but this, that it indicates some lamentable lowering of the Christian ideals? A church which, for any cause whatever, is permitting itself to be separated more and more from the toiling millions is in danger of losing its right to the Christian name. It ought to be asking itself very earnestly whether it bears the character of its Master and is filled with his spirit. The tests which he applied to himself, by which he insisted that his claims to the Messiahship should be judged, are the tests which the church of to-day must apply to itself. If the church cannot meet them, there is something wrong with the church.

It may be said that the fault is with those who have gone out or who have not come in; that they are self-exiled; that bad leaders have filled them with suspicion and enmity. But whatever truth there may be in this, it is a confession of incompetency. The church has no right

to shield itself behind such a plea. When two are estranged the heavier blame must rest on the stronger. The presumption is that he, with his larger knowledge, and ampler spiritual resources, could have overcome suspicion and disarmed enmity. If such an alienation as this has taken place the church must be mainly to blame for it. We have no right to admit that any kind of ill-will can resist the appeal of patient, resolute, self-sacrificing love. We ought to believe that the love of Christ, abiding in his people, is invincible. If we have failed to overcome the tendencies to the alienation of the common people from the church we have failed to use the power entrusted to us.

Let us not belittle this failure. It means much to us, more than most of us are ready to acknowledge. It has weakened the church in a vital part. It has set in motion tendencies which, if they are not arrested, will end in degeneration and decay. Something may survive but it will not be the church for which Jesus Christ gave his life.

Consider, for a moment, what will happen, if tendencies now at work are not arrested. The day is not far distant when the church will be the representative of the wealthy and well-to-do people, and of those affiliated with them; of the merchants, the manufacturers, the professional people, the teachers, the salaried men and women; and when the mechanics, the operatives, the hand-workers in general, and the common laborers will be practically outside of it. Is that a result which any one can contemplate with equanimity? Would not the doom of the church be registered in such a condition as that? What must be the relation of Jesus Christ to a church which is suffering itself to drift into that condition, or anything approximating to it?

The church and the nation are thus together confronting a serious question. It is the question whether they are in danger of losing the right to bear the Christian name. It is the question whether the character of each is passing through a transformation which tends to make it something quite other than once it was.

It should not be necessary to prove that the Christian church cannot expect to live and flourish when it ceases to represent in its character and life that which was essential in the character and life of Christ.

There may be some question as to whether the nation is in equal peril from the same cause. It may be said that the nation makes no profession of faith and cannot be punished for apostasy. But this is not a question of profession. It is a question of life and death. There is a way of life for nations, as for men, and that is the Christian way. Mr. Kidd, in a great historic generalization, points it out, in philosophic terms. There is a "cosmic process," he tells us, "which is everywhere triumphant in human history. There has been no suspension of it.

There has been no tendency of suspension." What is this process? It is *"the emancipation and the raising of the lower classes of the people."* Now there is no compulsion by which a nation can be forced to organize its life in harmony with this process. Some nations, Russia, for example, have obstinately refused to do so. But cosmic processes do not halt or turn aside for the greatest nations; the nations go down before them, as Russia is going down to-day. The United States did organize its life in harmony with this process, of which Jesus Christ is the concrete embodiment, and incarnation. If it swerves from this high ideal, if it suffers itself to become careless of the interests of those with whom he identified himself, the cosmic process will go on. For though the kings of finance set themselves, and the trusts and the grafters take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, 'Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us,' He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision. When any nation suffers its power to fall into the hands of those who plunder the poor for their enrichment, the ominous fingers will be seen writing upon the wall, "Thou art weighed and found wanting."

It cannot, of course, be conceived that the church should emerge unharmed from the wreck of the nation. The life of the two is indissolubly joined together. The church is the soul of the nation, if the nation has a soul. The nation's faithlessness is proof and consequence of the church's infidelity. If the church were alive with the life of Christ neither the church nor the nation could perish.

Therefore there comes to-day a mighty call to the church to save the life of the nation in saving its own life. Of the seriousness of this juncture there can be no question. I am content to be called an alarmist, if you will. There are times when the watchman must blow the trumpet and warn the people. I believe that my habit is sufficiently optimistic, but optimism is treachery. It is not well with the church, this day; it is ill with the church. Her grip is loosening, her energies are flagging; there is a perceptible slackening in her progress. Something is wrong and every thoughtful man knows it.

Something is wrong with our evangelism. What is it? Is it the Higher Criticism and the New Theology? Read Dr. Brown's sober, searching, candid review of the Chapman meetings in Oakland. All the churches, of every name, co-operated most cordially; these churches were crowded—with church members—every day for weeks; the theology of all the preaching was above suspicion; the Higher Criticism was put to shame, and sociology was not so much as mentioned; but the great outside multitude, the multitude of the unchurched, was practically untouched. This is the testimony.

Is it the newer thinking that is needed? Well, we had that, in its most persuasive and attractive form, in Columbus, just before Easter; when Dr. Abbott in a series of the most luminous sermons, set forth the truth as it is in Jesus so clearly and winningly that it seemed as if no rational man could resist the appeal: and though the church was crowded every night to the doors, there was but slight response to the call for enlistment.

Something is wrong here. This great society, with its magnificent record behind it, with a strong hold upon the affections of Congregationalists, with great obligations upon it and great opportunities before it, finds itself confronting a crisis in its history, crippled by its debt, doubtful of its resources, and anxiously challenging the future. In other societies there is solicitude and uncertainty.

What does it all mean? I believe, my brethren, that we have seen, this evening, something of what it means. The church has so far forgotten its essential character, that it has lost no small measure of its power. Its alliance is mainly with the prosperous. Its hopes are centered upon the strong and the influential. I do not say that it has wholly lost its interest in the poor; that is nowhere true; but that interest has ceased to be, in too many cases, the central and commanding interest. It is not an apostate church; God forbid that I should say any such thing; but it is a church of whom He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand is saying: "I know thy works, and thy toil and thy patience: . . . nevertheless I have this against thee that thou didst leave thy first love." Thy first love—the love that thou didst learn at the feet of the Master,—the love of the humblest and the neediest. They are not to thee what they were to him; thou canst not say what he said, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor." Therefore it is that when thou goest forth with the good tidings there is a deepening and widening gulf betwixt thee and those to whom thou art sent: therefore it is that thy high enthusiasms are chilled and the pulses of thy life beat feebly, and thy treasuries are empty, and thy heart is filled with fear. Thou hast been looking for help to the prosperous and the powerful: thou hast forgotten whence thy strength must come.

O Daughter of my people, that thou mightest know, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, before they are hidden from thine eyes! For it is He who is the incarnation of the Eternal Wisdom who is calling unto thee, "Whoso findeth me findeth life," and thou knowest where to search for him; with what sort of people he is always identified; in what company he may be found.

This is the message for the churches, for all the churches. It is their life that needs to be replenished; when they have found him, there

will be resources enough for all their work. Brethren, I take this word home to myself, the reproach of it, the shame of it. I know that this is what my church needs more than anything else—a closer identification with the life of the common people. It has lain heavily on my heart many days, and I have been seeking for ways of bridging the chasm which separates us from those who would, we know, be Christ's closest friends if he were here. I am persuaded that this is the one great need of all our churches, to break down the barriers that separate us from them, to overcome their suspicions and their fears, to make them believe that we love them, that their interests are dear to us, that the brotherhood of man is not to us a phrase, but the central fact of our lives. I do not believe that our evangelism will accomplish anything until we can solve this problem; when it is solved, a flame of sacred love will be kindled that will run like prairie fire all over the land.

It is your message, too, brethren of this society—yours, no less than ours, yours because it is ours. On the frontiers, in the hamlets, in the swarming, polyglot populations of the cities, you must make friends with the poor. They are your strongest allies. Win their love and all is well with you. You may get the co-operation of all the plutocrats in the country and it will do you no permanent good; your treasury will be quickly drained and your debts will accumulate, but if you can make the poor people, the common people, believe in you and love you, your cause will not fail nor will your springs run dry. The Lord must love the poor people, the common people, said Mr. Lincoln, for he has made so many of them. He does love them; they are very near to him; and it is therefore well worth while to have them for our friends.

The cities, the great industrial centers, the mining districts, are full of these people who are outside the churches—and who, though most of them are not in want, and need no charity, are, in a spiritual sense, "distressed and scattered, as sheep having no shepherd." It was to such as these that the heart of the Master went out in compassion; it is to them that we must go.

You say that you have been trying to reach them; yes, we have all been trying,—about half trying; but we have not put into our endeavor the passion of consecrated purpose which a Christly love would inspire.

I am persuaded that this is the underlying reason of all our embarrassments and perplexities, as a society. There may have been errors of policy, faults of management, but the conditions that disturb us to-day have a deeper origin; they will not be cured by any new adjustments of machinery. They spring from a cooling enthusiasm, a waning love in the hearts of the people of our churches. We are out of touch with the sources of our power. We have lost the Messianic

fire. It will never be rekindled until with all our hearts we return to Him who said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor,"—and who, under the shadow of Gethsemane, prayed: "As thou didst sent me into the world, even so sent I them into the world."

If all this is true, doubtless it will call on us all for some deep searchings of heart, some changes in our methods of work, some new alignment of our forces, some simplification of our lives, some broadening of our friendships to include many with whom we have had, hitherto, but little in common. But all these sacrifices will bring in their own compensation. And I trust that to some of us, at least, there may appear a vision of what the church of Jesus Christ might be, in this day and generation, if she would gather into herself the resources that belong to her,—even the weak and despised things—the things that God hath chosen,—and thus replenished and equipped would go forth to do battle for her Lord. To such a church there could come no dream of defeat, no fear of failure; the Kingdom and the greatness of the Kingdom under the whole heaven would be hers, and in the name of her Lord she would enter in and take possession.

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